

Equality Scheme for Belfast City Council



Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and
Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

We are committed to making sure that our services and information are available to all parts of the community. If you need this information in an alternative format or language, please contact us at:

Equality and Diversity Unit Officer

Belfast City Council
Room 117, City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Telephone: (028) 9027
0511

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Freephone: (0800) 0855 412

Text phone: (028) 9027 0405

SignVideo: <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/ContactUs.aspx>

~~This document is available in a range of formats on request.
Please contact us with your requirements.~~

Contents

Foreword	3
Chapter 1 Introduction	4
Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998	4
How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of Belfast City Council.....	4
Who we are and what we do	4
Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the	6
section 75 duties (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)).....	6
Responsibilities and reporting	6
Action plan/action measures	7
Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting.....	10
Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing	14
the impact of policies	14
Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity	14
Screening.....	14
Equality impact assessment.....	16
Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity	16
What we publish.....	16
How we publish the information	17
Where we publish the information	17
Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))	18
Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring	19
Chapter 5 Staff training.....	20
Commitment to staff training	20
Training objectives	20
Awareness raising and training arrangements	20

Monitoring and evaluation	21
Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public.....	22
access to information and services we provide	22
Access to information.....	22
Access to services	22
Assessing public access to information and services	23
Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme.....	24
Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure.....	25
Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme	27
Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme	28
Appendix 1 Organisational chart.....	29
Appendix 2 Groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for NI purposes.....	30
Appendix 3 List of consultees (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))	31
Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed	<u>33</u> <u>34</u>
Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring	<u>34</u> <u>35</u>
Appendix 5 Glossary of terms.....	<u>35</u> <u>36</u>
Appendix 6 Copy of Belfast City Council Committee template	<u>38</u> <u>39</u>

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act¹.

In our equality scheme, we set out how Belfast City Council proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and elected Members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our equality scheme.

We, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of the Council and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.



Lord Mayor

Chief Executive

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires Belfast City Council to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority². This includes our employment and procurement functions.

How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of Belfast City Council

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires Belfast City Council as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 We are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

Who we are and what we do

1.4 The role of the council is set out in the Local Government Act and the Transitional Regulations (Transitional, Supplementary and Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (NI) 2014.

² Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Under this Act, the council has two primary functions:

The Council as civic leader

As the only democratically elected body representing the people of Belfast, the Council provides leadership and strategic direction to shape, develop and manage the city. The Council continues to work with other organisations to generate wealth, protect the environment, promote equality, improve community relations and encourage local people to participate more in civic life.

Councillors are committed to addressing local needs and to dealing with the issues affecting local communities and the city. As many of these issues extend beyond the direct remit of the Council, the Council will use its convening power to bring together key partners from across the city and lobby to develop innovative solutions to the challenges facing Belfast. The Council's leadership role involves building relationships with the wide variety of organisations working to improve the city for the benefit of everyone.

At every opportunity, the Council seeks to improve the economic, social and environmental development of Belfast and ensure that the city's resources are used in the most effective, efficient way possible to improve the quality of people's lives.

The Council as a service provider

Belfast City Council is the largest of the 11 councils in Northern Ireland. It is responsible for delivering an extensive range of key services such as refuse collection and disposal, street cleansing, local planning, building control and environmental health, off-street parking, community development, leisure, parks and recreational facilities and support for the arts, tourism and economic development. The Council has a range of regulatory and licensing responsibilities in areas such as environmental health, building control, waste control and street cleanliness.

The Council aims to provide the highest quality services to the people and businesses of Belfast. In so doing, the Council seek to ensure that all of its services are accessible and designed for the convenience of the people that use them. The Council will work to make the best use of all its resources to meet local needs and improve the quality of peoples' lives.

1.5 The current organisational structure of the Council, summarising the functions of Departments, is shown on **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme. For example, consultation in Chapter 3, assessing and monitoring of impact of policies arrangements in Chapter 4, staff training in Chapter 5, access to information in Chapter 6, the complaints procedure in Chapter 8, publication of the revised Equality Scheme in Chapter 9 and review of the Equality Scheme in Chapter 10.

In addition we have the following arrangements in place for ensuring compliance with and reporting on the effective implementation of our Section 75 statutory duties.

Responsibilities and reporting

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.

2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Council for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.

Directors are responsible for the implementation of the Equality Scheme within their individual Departments, including the screening of policies. The Directors are supported by identified ~~departmental policy~~ officers with responsibility for equality ~~compliance issues~~ and liaising with the Equality and Diversity Officer through the Equality & Diversity Network (Operational). The Equality & Diversity Network (Strategic) comprises a group of Directors who oversee all equality-related work across the Council and report on equality-related matters to the Policy Officers' Group, which in turn, reports to Council's Corporate Management Team.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance our Equality & Diversity ~~Officer~~ Unit at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

Equality and Diversity Unit

Belfast City Council
Room 117, City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Tel: (028) 9027 0511

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Freephone: (0800) 0855 412

Text phone: (028) 9027 0405

SignVideo: <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/ContactUs.aspx>

2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans³.

2.6 Employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant.

2.7 The Council prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties. The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. The Council also commits to reporting on the progress made in delivering on the Section 75 statutory duties and the action plan in its Corporate Plan Review and Update.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

or by contacting the Equality & Diversity ~~Officer~~Unit at the address at 2.4 above.

2.9 The Council liaises closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

2.10 The Equality & Diversity Officer has made a series of presentations to Departmental Management teams, the Policy Officers' Group and other relevant staff. We are reviewing our Equal Opportunities and Equality & Good Relations training to reflect the revised Equality Scheme and its commitments.

The Council is committed to the promotion of the revised Equality Scheme and will use various media to reach a wide range of audiences ~~redesign its website to ensure that equality information is displayed more prominently~~. The Council's ~~Equality Reference Guide and Equality Toolkit information~~ for staff will be revised alongside the revised Equality Scheme.

Action plan/action measures

2.11 An action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations will be developed within six months from the date of approval of this Equality Scheme, ~~within six~~

³ See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

~~months of 1 April 2015 ie from the date of the new Council taking on new functions~~ in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines.

2.12 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will gather and analyse information across the Section 75 categories⁴ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies⁵.

2.13 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

2.14 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.

2.15 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below.

2.16 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.

2.17 The Council will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.18 Additional arrangements for assessing compliance with the section 75 duties:

Council has introduced a set template (see **Appendix 6**) for all Committee reports. This template has a specific section titled “equality and good relations implications” and ensures that Departments must detail any equality and good relations implications of the matter under discussion. This demonstrates Council’s commitment to mainstreaming equality and good relations across all of its work and is a key element in our compliance and monitoring process.

2.19 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on request from the Equality & Diversity Officer at the address at 2.54 above.

The action plan will also be available on the Belfast City Council website:

⁴ See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.

⁵ See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

If you require it in an alternative format please contact the Equality & Diversity Officer at the address at 2.4 above.

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance "Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)").

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see **Appendix 3**), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
- Internet discussions or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *Let's Talk Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)*.

In addition we will utilise the following existing Belfast City Council fora: Equality Consultative Forum, comprising representation from Section 75 organisations; our Youth Forum; our Seniors' Forum; and our Migrant Forum.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats⁶, in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees. We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and elected Members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our equality scheme. This will be delivered through the Consultative Forum mechanism.

3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees⁷ on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our Equality Scheme by undertaking the following:

- Email notification to all consultees within one month of our Equality Scheme and Action Plan being approved by the Equality Commission
- Quarterly Equality internal meetings to discuss targets and progress on the Equality Scheme and actions related to Council functions and business
- As appropriate, arranging pre-consultation meetings with key Section 75 groups and representatives to discuss specific policy issues
- Publish on the internet, and as appropriate, circulate equality progress updates, commitments in key action plans and minutes

3.2.6 The consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view.

⁶ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁷ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or Britain and north of Ireland wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments⁸.

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our authority's control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required. Officers organising consultation should refer to Council's Equality [Reference Guide Toolkit](#) (available on Council's [website/intranet site](#)).

3.2.9 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2.10 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

3.2.11 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3).

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at **Appendix 3**. It can also be obtained from our website at:

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

or by contacting the Equality & Diversity [Officer Unit](#) at the address at 2.4 above.

⁸ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring

3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact the Equality & Diversity Officer to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c);
Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

4.1 In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any proposed, amended or existing strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g. draft, pilot, high level or sectoral.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.3 The Council uses the tools of screening and equality impact assessment to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance.

Screening

4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development /review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.

4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, equality specialists, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)

- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'minor' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate Head of Service/ Director within the Council.

4.11 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'major' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate Head of Service/Director within the Council.

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none', in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the

decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate Head of Service/Director within the Council.

4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

and on request from the Equality & Diversity ~~Officer~~ Unit at the address at 2.4 above.

4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.

4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.23].

Equality impact assessment

4.16 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.18 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 "Our Arrangements for Consulting").

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.19 We make available publicly the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Council over the three month period
- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Screening decisions, i.e:
 - whether the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment.
 - whether the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
 - whether the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
- where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
- a link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

4.21 Screening templates

Please refer to 4.13 above for details on the availability of our screening templates.

4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
- Information and data collected
- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website:

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

and by contacting the Equality & Diversity Officer Unit at the address at 2.4 above.

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as the Council's *City Matters* magazine.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the Council follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.

4.29 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
- Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.30 If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. All other information on monitoring will reviewed annually and will be made available through our Equality Consultative Forum and published on our website.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]. We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. All other information on monitoring will be reviewed annually and made available through our Equality Consultative Forum and published on our website.

4.34 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

Chapter 5 Staff training

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 Our Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Council to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and an awareness raising programme for all elected Members of Council. We will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

5.3 The Council has drawn up a detailed training plan for its staff and elected members which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff and elected Members fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Council's equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and elected Members are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.

- Council staff will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within 4 working weeks of the approval of this scheme. This will be achieved through inclusion in the monthly staff briefing report.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for key staff within the Council who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.
- Policy staff will receive a full briefing on the scheme through the [Policy Officers' Group Equality & Diversity Network \(Operational\)](#).
- Council's own publications, *City Matters* (external) and *Intercomm* (internal), will include articles on the revised equality scheme and its contents.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.

In order to share resources and expertise, the Council will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.
- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.
- Equal Opportunities and Good Relations training is mandatory for all staff and refresher training is provided every three years.

Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

6.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others. In particular:

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of minority ethnic groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days.

Information can be made available for children and young people, people with disabilities and minority ethnic communities through the various Council hosted Fora listed at 3.2.3. The Council also liaises with a variety of representative organisations outside these fora to produce information in alternative formats and languages as required. The Council will continue to take into account existing and developing good practice in relation to making information accessible.

6.4 The Council is committed to making information available online through our website www.belfastcity.gov.uk. Our own magazine, *City Matters*, published several times a year, is distributed to over 130,000 addresses in Belfast.

Access to services

6.5 The Council is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. The Council also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

- All Council staff have received Disability Awareness training.
- The Council's website has been designed with accessibility in mind and follows the accessibility guidelines issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Our website is maintained at Level AA of the W3C Web Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG 2.1) and is speech enabled.
- The Council's own magazine, *City Matters*, published several times a year, is distributed to over 130,000 addresses in Belfast. We have adopted the BS 8300 standard in relation to compliance with DDA 1995 in this regard and *City Matters* is made available in alternative formats on request.
- Council has extended its contract with *AccessAble*, a web-based accessibility information service which currently provides detailed accessibility information for over 750 venues in Belfast.

Assessing public access to information and services

6.6 We monitor our functions annually, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

These include:

- monitoring of complaints
- the annual up-dating of statistical information, such as the Baseline Profile of Belfast, which is used in the development of Council's corporate planning process
- the conducting of a major public consultation exercise every 2-3 years to find out the views of the residents of Belfast have about living in the city and about Council services
- monitoring the uptake of our services as part of our normal procedure
- a comprehensive monitoring system for employees of the Council across all section 75 categories
- making reasonable adjustments for staff with specific needs
- annual monitoring of the website regarding plain English.

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme (Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

7.1 **Appendix 4** outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment is listed in the timetable of measures at **Appendix 4**. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.19.

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 10.)

8.1 The Council is responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that the Council has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme should contact:

Equality and Diversity ~~Officer~~Unit

Belfast City Council
Room 117, City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Telephone: (028) 9027 0511

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Freephone: (0800) 0855 412

Text phone: (028) 9027 0405

SignVideo: <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/ContactUs.aspx>

8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 10 working days.

8.5 The Equality & Diversity Officer will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within 30 working days of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to 2 months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the Council will cooperate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, the Council will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 The Council will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 Our equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from the Equality & Diversity ~~Officer~~Unit, who can be contacted at the address at 2.4 or 8.3 above.

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website at:

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days.
- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats (CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- We will also use the following existing Belfast City Council fora: Equality Consultative Forum, comprising representation from Section 75 organisations; our Youth Forum; our Seniors' Forum; and our Migrant Forum to ensure that we communicate our equality scheme effectively to children and young people, older people, people with disabilities and minority ethnic communities.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see **Appendix 3** of the equality scheme, visit our website at:

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/equality>

or contact the Equality & Diversity ~~Officer~~Unit, who can be contacted at the address at 2.4 or 8.3 above.

Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 8. (3))

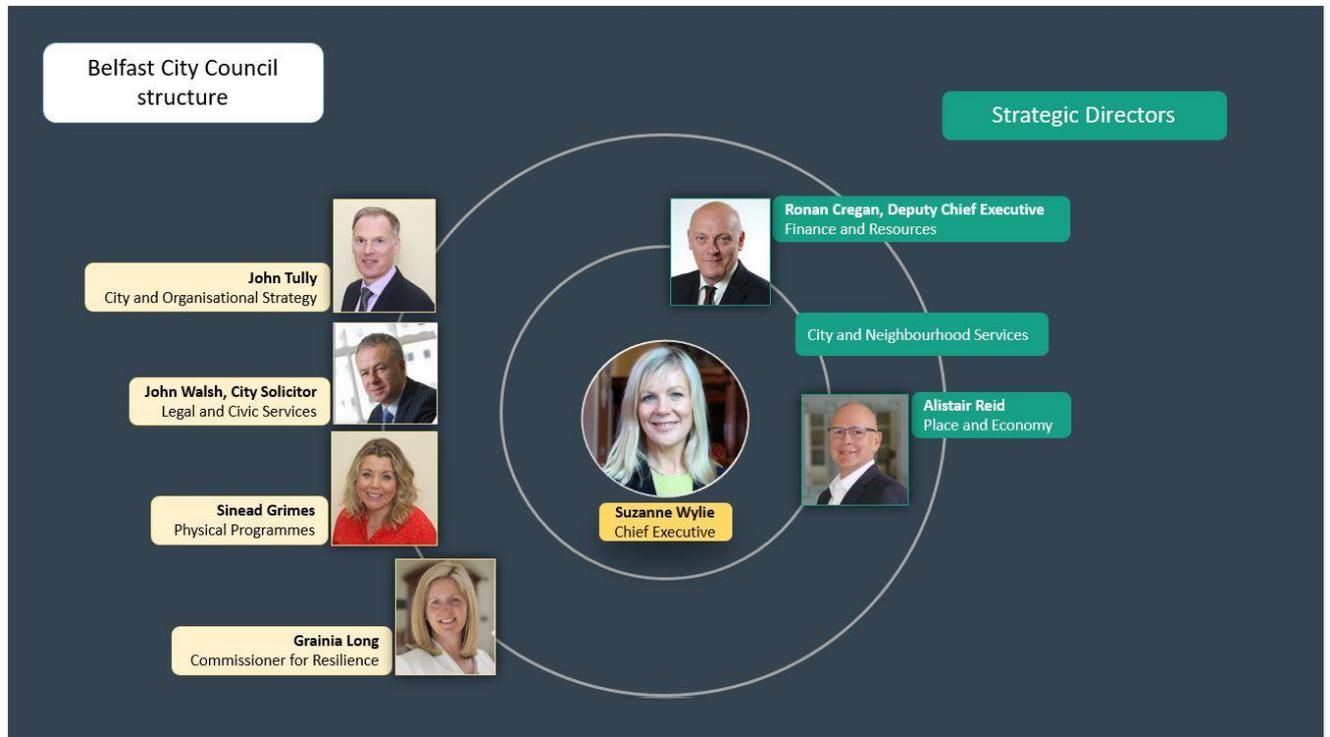
10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public on the Council's website and sent to the Equality Commission.

Appendix 1 Organisational chart

~~A new structure is currently being completed by council and will be included here once approved.~~



Appendix 2 Groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for NI purposes

This list is for illustration purposes only and is not exhaustive.

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths. For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order ⁹ . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any perceived religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “similar philosophical belief”.
Political opinion ¹⁰	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

⁹ See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: “*In this Act...*”*political opinion*” and “*religious belief*” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.”

¹⁰ *ibid*

Appendix 3 List of consultees (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

This consultation list is an indicative one and is not exhaustive; it is updated on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant to Council's functions and policies.

Action Ability Belfast	Diocese of Connor
Action Deaf Youth	Disability Action NI
Action on Hearing Loss	Disability Network Real
Age NI	Disability Sports NI
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Divis Community Centre
Alzheimer's Society NI Belfast	Donegall Pass Community Centre
Ardoyne Community Centre Committee	East Side Partnership
Ardoyne Association Advice Centre	Education Authority
Arthritis Care NI	Employers' Forum on Disability
Arts Council NI	Equality Coalition
Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland	Equality Commission Northern Ireland
Autism NI	Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland
AWARE NI	Falls Community Council
Ballynafeigh Community Development Assoc	Féile An Phobail
Barnardo's Northern Ireland	Finaghy Community Centre
Belfast Baha'i Community	Forbairt Feirste
Belfast Chinese Christian Church	Gay & Lesbian Youth in NI
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	Glen Road Community Centre
Belfast Islamic Centre	GMB
Belfast Jewish Community	Greater Shankill Partnership Board
Belfast Lions Club	Green Party
Brain Injury Matters	Guide Dogs Northern Ireland
Branial Community Centre	Hammer Community Centre
British Deaf Association	Here NI
Bryson An Munia Tober	Highfield Community Centre
Business Services Organisation	Horn Drive Community Centre
Cara Friend	Housing Rights Service
Carers Northern Ireland	Indian Community Centre
Carew 11 Family & Training Centre	Inverary Community Centre
CAUSE	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Centre for Independent Living	Knocknagoney Community Centre
Children's Law Centre	Lenadoon Community Forum
Chinese Welfare Association Northern Ireland	Ligoniel Community Centre
Communication Workers Union	Local Government Staff Commission
Community Dev. & Health Network NI	Markets Community Centre
Community Foundation	Mencap Northern Ireland
Concorde Community Centre	Methodist Church in Ireland
Co-Operation Ireland	Mind Wise NI
Council for the Homeless NI	Morton Community Centre
Cregagh Youth & Community Centre	MS Society NI
Culturlann McAdam Ó Fiaich	Multicultural Group-Windsor Women's Centre
DAERA	NAS Northern Ireland
Dee Street Community Centre	NASUWT Northern Ireland
Democratic Unionist Party	National Children's Bureau Northern Ireland

NDCS Northern Ireland
Neurological Alliance of Ireland
Newtownards Road Women's Group Ltd
NI Chest Heart and Stroke
NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
NI Community Relations Council
NIACRO
NICVA
NIPSA
North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum
North Queen Street Community Centre
Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
Northern Ireland European Women's Platform
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association
Northern Ireland Policing Board
NOW Group
OI Kwan Chinese Women's Group
Parkinson's UK in Northern Ireland
People Before Profit Alliance
Playboard
Play Resource Centre
Pobal
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Progressive Unionist Party
Queen's University Belfast
Queerspace
Rainbow Project
RNIB
Royal British Legion
Rural Development Council NI
Sandy Row Community Centre
Save the Children Fund
Sense Northern Ireland
Shankill Women's Centre
Shopmobility Belfast
Simon Community Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
South Belfast Partnership Board
Sport Northern Ireland
Stroke Association NI
Suffolk Community Centre
The Cedar Foundation
The Communication Advice Centre
The Focus Trust
Tourism Northern Ireland
Traditional Unionist Voice
Tullycarnet Community Centre
UCU Northern Ireland
Ulster-Scots Community Network
Ulster Unionist Party
UNISON NI
Unite The Union
University of Atypical
USEL
Victim Support N.I.
Visual Access (NI) Ltd
Volunteer NOW
WAVE Trauma Centre
West Belfast Partnership Board
Whiterock Community Centre
Windsor Women's Centre
Women's Aid Federation N.I.
Women's Forum Northern Ireland
Women's Resource & Development Agency
Women's Support Network
Woodvale Community Centre
Workers Party
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Youth for Christ Northern Ireland
Youth Initiatives
Youth Justice Agency
Youth Link Northern Ireland
Youth Action Northern Ireland

Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))

This table has been updated with new dates.

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]	Equality & Diversity Officer / Chief Executive	31 August (annually)
Action Plan		
Consultation on draft action plan [2.15]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Jan –Mar - <u>May</u> 2021
Finalised action plan published [2.19]	Equality & Diversity Officer /Chief Executive	<u>June</u> April 2021
Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.16]	Equality & Diversity Officer	<u>June</u> April 2021
Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]	Equality & Diversity Officer	July (annually)
Screening Reports [4.15]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Quarterly
Monitoring		
Review of monitoring information [4.31] 4.33] 6.6]	Departmental Managers/ Equality & Diversity Officer	Annually
Training		
Development of summary information on scheme [5.4]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Annually
Development of overall training programme [5.5]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Annually
Evaluation of training [5.6]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Annually
Communication		
Assessing access to information and services [6.6]	<u>City & Organisational Strategy</u> Corporate Communications	Annually

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Communication of equality scheme [9.3]	Equality & Diversity Officer	-Within one month of Scheme's approval
Notification of consultees [9.3]	Equality & Diversity Officer	Within one month of Scheme'
Review		
Review of equality scheme [10.1]	Equality & Diversity Officer	In line with ECNI guidelines – within Five years (Mar 2025)
Any other measures proposed	Equality & Diversity Officer	Ongoing

4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. All other information on monitoring will reviewed annually and will be made available through our Equality Consultative Forum and published on our website.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]. We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. All other information on monitoring will be made available through our Equality Consultative Forum and published on our website.

Appendix 5 Glossary of terms

Action plan

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

Adverse impact

Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.

Audit of inequalities

An audit of inequalities is a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies. An audit can be used by a public authority to inform its work in relation to the Section 75 equality and good relations duties. It can also enable public authorities to assess progress on the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties, as it provides baseline information on existing inequalities relevant to a public authority's functions.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (ie, service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Equality impact assessment

The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Equality of opportunity

The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation. The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.

Equality scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An equality scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

Good relations

Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.

Mainstreaming equality

The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the everyday work of public authorities from the outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.

Mitigation of adverse impact

Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems. Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.

Northern Ireland Act

The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

Policy

The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties. Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual'. In the context of Section 75, the term **policies** covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis. Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine 'significance' either in relationships or differences in the data.

Screening

The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:-

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status and sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, each public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Appendix 6 Copy of Belfast City Council Committee template

Belfast City Council

Subject:	
Date:	
Reporting Officer:	
Contact Officer:	

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
2.0	Recommendations
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>

	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
4.0	Appendices